Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for preserving configuration data during firmware modification, said method comprising:

    a) extracting configuration data from an existing firmware structure in a firmware device;

    b) storing said configuration data;

    c) combining said configuration data with a new firmware structure thereby creating a configured firmware structure; and

    d) downloading a new said configured firmware structure to said firmware device; and

    e) restoring said configuration data to said new firmware structure in said firmware device.

2. (original) A method as described in claim 1 wherein said storing takes place on a web server.

3. (original) A method as described in claim 1 wherein said downloading is

    accomplished via a link between a download computing device and said firmware

    device.

4. (currently amended) A method for preserving configuration data during firmware

    modification, said method comprising:

    a) extracting configuration data from an existing firmware structure in a firmware

        device wherein said extracting is accomplished over a network connection;

    b) storing said configuration data on a web server;

    c) modifying said configuration data to be compatible with a new firmware

        structure;

    d) combining said modified configuration data with said new firmware structure

        thereby creating a configured firmware structure; and

    e) ~~downloading~~ writing ~~a new~~ said configured firmware structure ~~from a download~~

        ~~computing device~~ to said firmware device~~, wherein said downloading is~~

        ~~accomplished via a direct connection; and~~

    f) ~~restoring said configuration data to said new firmware structure in said device~~.

5. (canceled)

6. (currently amended)A method as described in claim 4 wherein said ~~restoring~~

    modifying also comprises installing additional configuration data not included in

    said extracted configuration data.

7. (currently amended) A method for preserving configuration data during firmware

    modification, said method comprising:

    a) uploading configuration data from an existing firmware structure in a firmware

        device wherein said uploading is accomplished over a network connection;

    b) storing said configuration data;

    c) ~~downloading a new firmware structure from a download computing device to said~~

        ~~firmware device thereby replacing said existing firmware structure;~~

    d) converting said configuration data to a format compatible with ~~said~~ a new

        firmware structure; ~~and~~

    e) combining said converted configuration data with said new firmware structure

        thereby creating a configured firmware structure; and

    f) installing said ~~converted configuration~~ configured firmware structure ~~data~~ to said

        ~~new~~ firmware ~~structure in said~~ device.

8. (original) A method as described in claim 7 wherein said storing is accomplished on a

    web server.

9. (original) A method as described in claim 7 wherein said storing is accomplished on a

download computing device.

10. (original) A method as described in claim 7 wherein said storing is accomplished on

said firmware device.

11. (original) A method as described in claim 7 wherein said downloading is

accomplished over a serial link.

12. (canceled)

13. (currently amended) A system for preserving configuration data during firmware

modification, said ~~method~~ system comprising:

a) a firmware device comprising a memory for storing an upgradable firmware

structure and configuration data;

b) a web-based data management utility residing on a server;

c) a download computing device;

d) a network connection connecting said firmware device, said download computing

device and said web-based management utility; and

e) a direct connection between said firmware device and said download computing

device, wherein said management utility may recover said configuration data

from said firmware device, ~~and~~ store said configuration data on said server,

combine said configuration data with a new firmware structure to create a

configured firmware structure and write said configured firmware structure to said

memory ~~while said firmware structure is upgraded to a new firmware structure and~~

~~wherein said configuration data may be installed to said new firmware structure~~

~~after upgrading thereby preserving said configuration data~~.

14. (currently amended) A system as described in claim 13 wherein said configuration

data is converted to a new format before ~~installation on~~ combination with said

new firmware structure.

15. (currently amended) A system as described in claim 13 wherein said configuration

data is compiled with additional configuration ~~information~~ data not included in

said extracted configuration data before ~~installation on~~ combination with said new

firmware structure.

16. (currently amended) A system as described in claim 15 ~~16~~ wherein said additional

configuration information is obtained by querying network devices.